

Pentecost – 2026
Numbers 11:24-30
Acts 2:1-21
John 7:37-39

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

Here's a bible verse, the Lord's own words, that is read at the interment of a believer in Christ. Remember, an interment takes place at a cemetery, a resting place for those who have died in Christ. Headstones cover the landscape. On the Last Day, when the trumpet sounds, when the Lord rides the clouds with His angels (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and calls the dead from their graves, what will that cemetery look like? Here's the verse: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). A cemetery is a harvest festival in waiting. In the blink of an eye, when our Triune God signals that the Last Day has arrived, the Lord will return and a cemetery will be a harvest festival of life. Every time you pass by a cemetery, let your mind's eye see the divine result that lies in wait. Resurrection defines a cemetery.

A harvest festival – it has already arrived. "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24 NIV). The Seed of the Woman, the Incarnate Son of God, fell to the ground in death. Crucified, the Lord Christ has watered the earth with His blood, making it a fertile ground for faith, a fertile domain for a harvest. You are a believer. Us – gathered in this place – and the whole Christian Church throughout the world – we are the harvest that God desires. God the Father gave His Son into death to generate this harvest. Pentecost is a harvest of salvation. This Divine Service is the ongoing manifestation of that first Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is the very present Lord and Giver of Life.

Here's a brief OT snapshot. The Feast of First Fruits was on the front side of the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). Get this, because this is beautiful: "You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain" (Deuteronomy 16:9). Then, after those 50 days there was a harvest festival. Joy was at the rafters. Gratitude swelled the hearts of God's holy people. The Lord provided the harvest and the Israelites celebrated as God prescribed. Now think of it Christologically. Think of Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) as God instructing His ancient people about something coming that would be way bigger than the fruits of the earth. Fifty days after the Seed of the Woman rose from the dead on Easter, fifty days after death was crushed beneath the nail pierced foot of the Son of God, the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church. Pentecost! Jesus is the first fruits. He is the first to burst the bonds of death. The First Fruits promises more, promises a coming harvest. Pentecost was the outpouring of Christ's righteousness on the church – a harvest festival of salvation. The Holy Spirit brought the redeeming fire of Christ's sacrifice to bear on those who heard the proclamation of Jesus' death and resurrection. Good Friday and Easter came in all their power as the Holy Spirit swept the fire of God's love through that holy assembly.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life. When God created Adam, He breathed into Adam the breath of life and Adam became a living being (Genesis 2:7). God's breath is God's Spirit. Adam was holy, sanctified. The breath of life – has God breathed into *you* the breath of life? More than biology, more than air in your lungs, has God breathed His Spirit into you? After Jesus rose from the dead, He breathed on His disciples, saying "Receive the Holy Spirit" linking His physical breath directly with the Holy Spirit. God desires a harvest festival of life, so He breathes into us the Holy Spirit. It is a baptismal reality. On Pentecost, St. Peter said: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is the river of living water that flows from the heart of the crucified King (John 7:38). The Holy Spirit has given life to you.

Think of it – Jesus said that the Spirit will lead us into all truth. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will take what His and make it known to us (John 16:14). Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a Comforter, an Advocate, and a Guide (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13). Now think of your life, your faith, your journey in this world. Have you felt, have you known, have you seen the evidence that the Holy Spirit defends you, protects your faith, shields you from the enemy? No matter how you dress it up, this world is inimical, hostile to Christianity. Haven't you felt out of step with the culture, out of step with the faithless world's creed which is eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die (1 Corinthians 15:32)? Aren't you outraged at the thought of defenseless babies being sacrificed on the altar of convenience? The Holy Spirit is in you (John 14:17). So said the Lord of the cross. In the face of a demonic roaring lion, the Holy Spirit has provided the shelter of Jesus' wounds, Jesus' holiness. Idolatry is all around us and yet here you are, in God's house, because your faith is alive. The power of Pentecost is embedded in your soul. The truth has set you free (John 8:31-32).

If you're like me, there've been times when you were unsure. If you're like me, then there have been times when you've felt spiritually weak. None of us jump from Christian mountain top to Christian mountain top. Darkness sometimes clouds our path. Our spirit is subject to feeling blue or worse. Calamities intrude when not invited. Family members become faithless, wandering into the poppy fields of worldly religion. Loneliness is a merciless specter that sometimes haunts our days. Spiritual aimlessness – that too can invade our hearts. And the Holy Spirit brings light. When we're unsure, the Holy Spirit is bold in direction. He is our Guide in this life. When the darkness of a self-centered world threatens to overtake us, the Holy Spirit brings light to our path. The Spirit of truth enlightens us. When our hands are weak and our knees are feeble, the Holy Spirit brings the strength of the Crucified and we stand with confidence, we stand with trust and determination. When depression descends and we need Hope rejuvenated, there is the Holy Spirit, turning our attention to the Love of God in Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit gives you the very best. Not pabulum, not psychobabble, not ever shifting human opinion; the Holy Spirit gives you the truth, the Verbum Dei, the Word of God, the Song of Heaven, the Light of eternal victory. Every virtue that the church possesses, she possesses because the Holy Spirit takes what is Christ's and makes it ours. Conviction, fortitude, humility, love, mercy and a keen desire to put others' needs above our own – the Holy Spirit is at His work. Christ's church is not a wobbly dwelling built from fragile materials (Psalm 48:12-13).

The garment of salvation is not a robe sewn from flimsy fabric (Isaiah 61:10). The Holy Spirit built this congregation using the divine resources of the Word and the Sacraments. We are strong by virtue of what He has done. We are strong by virtue of what He is doing. The robe of Christ's righteousness is our glory. It's woven by blood and love and truth and the Holy Spirit has vested you in its beauty. You are so closely bound to our Lord and Savior by the Holy Spirit's work that nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39). The Holy Spirit has prepared you for the harvest.

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